[92 cont.]

342 On the Reef Islands Quiros mentions the roof covering
171 of palm leaves and the walls of matting (5). The parallels

5. Dalrymple, p. 127.

that Coote draws with the New Hebrides (6), as well as the

6. Coote, p. 164.

general silence about the shape of the houses, leads one to conclude that the widespread rectangular gabled house predominates. The interior of houses on Nufiloli is divided by
353 partitions from three to four feet high into as many as six sec-
513 tions, each of which serves as a sleeping room for a wife of
595 the owner. The chief's house that Coote entered contained four
562 of them (7). When a stranger entered, each woman retired

7. Coote, ibid.

silently to her room.

342 For Vanikoro, as for Ndeni the presence of the two hut forms, the gable-roofed huts and the conical-roofed huts, side by side seems to be typical, except that here they do not seem to be separated by locality as they are there, although according to the illustrations in D'Urville and F. de Tolna, the individual types seem to predominate in certain places (8). Only

8. D'Urville, pp. 153; 355 (Sainson); 361 (Quoy); Atlas, Pl. 182 ff. F. de Tolna pp. 267 ff.

the gable-roofed huts are described in more detail by D'Urville, as well as by Dillon (9), and perhaps it may be concluded from

9. Dillon, pp. 273 f. D'Urville, pp. 216, 326.

584 [141 cont.]
small initial payment makes the girl taboo, so that no other man
583 can buy her. In each case the final purchase of the woman is a
614 matter between the two kin groups [Sippen], that is, the totem
groups; not only the closest members, but all the male members
of the kin group demand their share of the purchase price, which
is always paid in feather money. It is therefore not rare that a
[584] betrothed couple must wait two years before they can marry be-
cause the kin group of the bridegroom is not yet able to pay the
584 purchase price. It seems that the bridegroom himself rarely takes
part in the negotiations; often he knows nothing about it at first.
Sometimes he is told that a girl has been chosen for him, and he
is admonished to avoid a certain house. He then guesses who his
chosen one is. Codrington mentions that often the bridegroom
[585] resists violently, even at the wedding, but he does not say whether
this is actually an aversion to the marriage or a ceremonial act.
We know nothing about the procedure of the wedding, but after-
591 wards the young husband takes his wife first to the house of his
father, until he builds his own home (4). In rarer cases no

4. Joest in Baessler, pp. 379, 381. Codrington, p. 239. O'Ferrall, pp. 223 f. According to F. de Tolna, Chez les Cannibales, p. 268, the people along the coast on Vanikoro buy wives from the people of the bush for a breast disk each.

[583] [628]

P31 engagement takes place, but the young man seduces a girl; in
583 that case, however, his kin group must pay the girl's kin group
595 whatever price is demanded (5). Polygamy depends upon the

5. Joest in Baessler, p. 383.

ability to pay (6).

6. Dillon, p. 305, says that "persons

[141 cont.]

595 of rank" [cited in English] practice polygamy. In view of the marriage preliminaries described, however, wealth is apparently the most important aspect of rank.

[556]

606 A marriage establishes a large number of restrictions in the intercourse of the kin groups related by marriage. The most strict, as among many peoples, are the regulations about the association of the mother-in-law with the son-in-law. They may not see each other or speak to each other; he is not permitted to mention her name, and vice versa. Even words in which the forbidden name occurs must be avoided. [142] If they should meet, the mother-in-law must step aside if she wants to avoid punishment (1). The prohibition affects the

1. Joest in Baessler, p. 382.

father-in-law only with respect to the mentioning of the name (2).

2. O'Ferrall, p. 224.

602 On the other hand, the prohibition against saying the name and looking applies to all those who shared in the purchase price, that is, all the members of the kin group that has become related by marriage. A violation of the regulation entitles the man to destroy part of the goods of the culprit. If a man and a 607 woman are involved for example, if brother-in-law and sister-in-law meet, the woman is obliged to turn her back or to cover her face. If she should not do this, her kin group would have to pay the man a fine (3).

3. Joest in Baessler, p. 382, and Tagebuch, p. [illegible] (nothing is said in the original text of the journal as to whether the prohibition against

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/197 cont./

small stick or a Pteropus bone as a net needle. The cord /198/ is strung onto this needle in loops (Fig. 45, Nos. 1 and 2) which slip off easily as the cord is used. During the plaiting the smaller nets are stretched with the great toe. The making of the knots is shown in Fig. 45, No. 3.

Political Affairs; War

Graebner's assumption (1) that the importance of the

1. [Ethn., I, p. 130.]

chief has decreased in recent times seems to be correct. I did not meet a true chief, and apparently all the men of a village decide questions of external policy. Nevertheless, there must be leaders, but they are merely the most important and the wealthiest men of a village, with no other position than that of a village elder, of a chairman in the men's house (2). They

2. [Dr. Speiser herewith verifies his assumption in Südsee, p. 299. This is probably also what O'Ferrall, section "Historical Sketch," means when he speaks of two or more chiefs in each village.]

can hardly give direct orders, but they are the nominal owners of the dance areas and the men's houses; also, their indirect influence may be considerable because of their wealth. Moreover, they sometimes indulge in the luxury of having wives in several villages, thus traveling from one village to another, and therefore have influence over extensive areas. As prominent men, after death they are shown the honors that were formerly bestowed on the chiefs.

Feuds between villages used to be very frequent and are not rare even today. The cause is almost always the

435 money changing specialize in it and
436 make a profit. These transactions take
[463] place before an informal gathering of witnesses in the men's clubhouse of a village, where the pieces of currency are draped over a horizontal bar for close comparison. Regardless of who has initiated the deal, the piece of greatest value (the "high piece") is hung over the center of the bar. Alongside it (and always in the direction of the Nembo River, a spring-fed stream symbolically associated with the currency spirits) is hung the "base piece," the most valuable of the belts to be exchanged for the high piece. On the other side is hung the "crown piece," the piece that makes up the difference in value between the base piece and the high piece. Values are matched in terms of the 10-point scale. For example, if the high piece is an average No. 6 and the base piece is a fine No. 7, a middling No. 7 may suffice as a crown.

[776]
[778]

In this manner the par value of the high piece is agreed on. But the price at which it now actually sells is something else again. Because high-value currency is scarcer than low-value currency, the owner of the high piece is a seller in a seller's market. The buyer (the owner of the base and crown pieces) must offer additional currency. It is not only that the high piece is newer; there are fewer new pieces in circulation. Hence market value is correlated to scarcity. The greater the par value of the high piece, the greater the spread between this value and the market price. (It is as though a $10 bill were worth a little more than two fives and a $20 bill worth more than two tens by a still larger margin.) It is the difficulty and expense of obtaining high-value pieces on the exchange market that ultimately leads a man to contract with the three currency specialists for a new piece.

438 Since all the feather currency originates on Santa Cruz Island, it must flow continually from its source to the Reef and Duff islands, where it is not manufactured. To maintain this one-way flow of currency the Reef Islanders have traditionally exported some of their women to Santa Cruz. Today the women go only as wives but once some went as concubines. Concubines were clearly distinguished from wives: they were shared by a group of men; they did no gardening or other domestic chores; having no dwelling of their own, they lived in the men's clubhouse. On the other hand, a concubine's possessors

[595]
[548]

[p 102(c)]

3:Davenport 2-5 (1958-1960)1962
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could purvey her services as a prostitute, sell her outright or even kill her without fear of retaliation. None of these things could be done with wives. But since the purchase price of a concubine was 10 times higher than a bride price, selling a girl into concubinage had its attractions for many Reef Island families. The British Government has forbidden the practice, but Reef Island women still go south as wives. Their bride prices are the main source of currency for their home islands. An imported wife brings extra prestige to a Santa Cruz man, and bride prices for Reef women run about twice as high as they do for domestic wives.

The Duff Islanders get their feather currency not by selling women but by building large sailing canoes that carry on interisland traffic in passengers and cargo. The men of the Duffs do not engage in that traffic themselves; they sell the canoes for feather currency to the people of a few of the western Reef Islands, who in turn specialize in voyaging and trading throughout the islands. These mariners sail even to the southern islands of Utupua and Vanikoro in search of trade. The two islands are outside the feather-currency area, but their people until recently depended on the canoes to bring them the shell disks and lengths of woven cloth they used as currency. For these precious items they traded, at fixed rates, packets of red honey eater feathers, and these were resold on Santa Cruz to the makers of feather currency. In this manner the two different money systems became interlocked and interdependent, and the economies of north and south remain so today, even though there is no longer any traffic in currency materials.

Since the end of World War II the Santa Cruz monetary system has come under pressure from the world outside. More and more Australian money has flowed into the islands; it circulates along with the feather currency and is completely interchangeable with it. Today the rate of exchange is roughly one shilling for a piece of feather money of minimum value. This makes the par value of a No. 1 piece 512 shillings, or about 25 Australian pounds. Figured in terms of labor (at the prevailing net wage rate for unskilled labor in the central Solomons, where most Santa Cruz men work at some point in their lives), the value of a new piece of currency is roughly comparable: about 20 to 24 pounds.

Plantation wages have nearly trebled since 1945. The great increase in the

higher the value of a piece of currency, the fewer there are; thus the rarity value increases with the value as determined by its condition. Translated in terms of our own money, it would be as if a ten-dollar bill was worth more than ten one-dollar bills because there are fewer of them in circulation. Unlike our money again, feather currency has no numerical units of value which permit easy and exact equivalencies to be made. Rather, the value of this exotic currency is not unlike that of precious gems, were they to be used as a medium of exchange. Each stone would be unique as to quality and size, and value could only be determined by recognized criteria of excellence plus the condition of the market.

Currency flows outward from its source throughout Santa Cruz Island and on to the Reef and Duff Islands in the north. These latter islands constitute areas of perennial shortage. Balancing this one-way flow of currency is a reverse movement of the most valuable commodity of all--women. The Reef Islands send out some of their women in exchange for bride prices paid in feather currency. Santa Cruz Island never sends its women abroad under any circumstances. Formerly, these women came to Santa Cruz both as wives and as concubines. The concubines were clearly distinguished from wives by the fact that they were shared by a group of men in a form of polyandry; they did no gardening or other domestic tasks normally assigned to women; and while they enjoyed a specially favored social position, they could be purveyed as prostitutes, sold outright, or even killed by the will of their owners alone. Bride prices for concubines were much higher than for ordinary wives--ten times higher to be exact. Due to government regulations, wives only are brought to Santa Cruz Island nowadays, but these are the prestigeful marriages, and their bride prices are larger than those of domestic unions.

This one-way movement of women is correlated with an interesting population phenomenon. Santa Cruz Island population statistics reveal an abundance of males as compared with females of marriageable age, while in the Reef Islands the ratio is nearly even. This abundance of men is a phenomenon which has been noted in other Melanesian and New Guinea populations, but it has neither been investigated nor explained.

The Duff Islands in the extreme northeast corner of the group come into the economic picture, not by sending out women, but by being specialists in making large sailing canoes in which cargos and passengers are transported interisland. These canoes are mainly sold to the Polynesian-speaking people of the small atolls of the Western Reef Islands who make their money by voyaging and trading throughout the group. Formerly, they sailed as far as the southern islands of Vanikoro and Utupua, ninety miles south of Santa Cruz Island. These islands depended upon receiving ground shell discs and special lengths of loom-woven fabric of banana fiber, specialties of certain districts of the Reef and Santa Cruz Islands, which were used as currency there. For these they traded feathers used on Santa Cruz Island for the making of feather currency. These shell and fabric currencies of Vanikoro and Utupua have no currency value in the island where they were made, and feather currency has no value in the former islands.

The Santa Cruz Group has a long history of contact with European civilization, beginning with Mendaña's second voyage in 1595. For the most part, however, the early contacts had little effect on the islanders, but were disastrous for the Europeans. Mendaña himself and many of his company died on Santa Cruz Island, Carteret lost some of his men there also when he attempted to land, La Perouse and his entire expedition perished on Vanikoro, and late in the nineteenth century Commodore Goodenough and a dozen Anglican missionaries, including one bishop, met death in several attempts to bring this island group within the confines of the British Empire and Christendom.

From 1900 onward the situation began to change. The few recruits who had gone away to work on plantations, and schoolboys who had gone away to mission schools returned